



# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

G U I D E

**NEIGHBORS UNITED**

**WON'T BE DIVIDED**



**N**eighborhood Watch is an effective program aimed at keeping crime out of our neighborhoods. It relies on the best crime-fighting tool ever invented — a good neighbor. Fortunately, good neighbors are found everywhere. They live in houses and apartment buildings, in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

This brochure explains how to work with local law enforcement to start and sustain an effective Neighborhood Watch program in your neighborhood, as well as Neighborhood Watch activities.

Be a good neighbor and help protect your community from criminals by participating in a Neighborhood Watch program. Remember, the battle against crime will not be won unless we fight together.

# Neighborhood Watch...

## **1. What Is A Neighborhood Watch Program?**

Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program that enlists the active participation of residents in cooperation with local law enforcement to reduce crime in their neighborhoods.

### **It involves...**

- Neighbors getting to know each other, taking the time to care about each other, and working together in a program of mutual assistance;
- Residents being trained to recognize and report suspicious activities in their neighborhood; and
- Crime prevention strategies, such as home security and suspicious activity identification and more.

## **2. Why Participate In A Neighborhood Watch Program?**

- There cannot be a law enforcement officer on every corner. Resident involvement is essential to combat crime.

- You and your neighbors are the ones who really know what is going on in your neighborhood.
- By cooperating with each other and with local law enforcement, people can help fight crime in their community the most effective way—by stopping it before it begins.
- Neighbors place signs in their windows and post signs on streets to warn criminals that they are in an active crime prevention neighborhood and that “neighbors are watching out for each other.”

### **3. What Makes A Neighborhood Watch Program Work?**

The key to Neighborhood Watch is community residents banding together to work with local law enforcement. These partnerships create a powerful force to carry out a successful Neighborhood Watch program. Neighborhood Watch works because citizens work as a group to:

- Take charge and decide what action is needed;
- Form liaisons with local law enforcement;
- Convince government to listen and respond to the community’s needs;
- Target specific problem areas;
- Develop realistic goals;
- Monitor their progress; and
- Celebrate their success.

# Starting A Neighborhood Watch Program...

## **Contact your local law enforcement agency.**

- Get help from your local law enforcement agency to organize your initial meeting.
- Ask about crime conditions in your neighborhood.
- Ask to have a law enforcement representative at your first meeting.

## **Talk to your neighbors.**

- Canvass your neighborhood for interest.
- Discuss any crime problems in your area.

## **Arrange a date, time and place for the first meeting.**

- Select a time that is convenient for most neighbors.
- Meet in the home of a neighbor or a local community center to foster an informal, comfortable atmosphere.
- Publicize your meeting at least one week in advance with door-to-door fliers and follow-up with phone calls the day before.

## **Select a block captain.**

- Be a spokesperson for the group.
- Serve as the liaison between law enforcement and your Neighborhood Watch group to organize and arrange Neighborhood Watch meetings.
- Recruit neighbors to share the responsibility of hosting meetings.
- Maintain a list of all members.

## **Have a Neighborhood Watch meeting.**

- Encourage each member to participate.
- Keep the process moving.
- Develop an action plan and activities.
- Ask someone to record the group's discussion.
- Gather and share information about your neighborhood.

# Neighborhood Watch Program Activities...

## **Neighborhood Cleanup**

Neighbors work together to clean up litter, paint over graffiti, sweep sidewalks, remove accumulations of garbage, weeds, and debris in the neighborhood. A bin and other necessary tools are usually available from your local law enforcement agency.

## **Home Security**

Invite your local law enforcement representatives to a Neighborhood Watch meeting to talk about securing your homes with effective door and window locks, adequate lighting, and landscaping. Ask them for suggestions and any special problems they may know about in your neighborhood or surrounding areas.

## **Operation Identification**

This program encourages neighbors to mark their property to make it easier for stolen valuables to be identified. Local law enforcement provides engraving pens and materials to engrave identification numbers on personal property.

## **Block Parents**

Identify homes where children know they can go for assistance if their own parents are not home. Place Neighborhood Watch signs in the windows of selected houses so that children can find them easily.

## **Crime Awareness**

Call upon law enforcement experts and community leaders to participate in Neighborhood Watch meetings to discuss issues such as personal safety tips, gangs, child safety, and drug houses.

# Maintaining A Neighborhood Watch Program...

Now that your Neighborhood Watch network is established, be sure that everyone understands the following basic guidelines:

- Be alert to unusual or suspicious behavior in your neighborhood. Call the police/sheriff immediately, if warranted. Write down descriptions of the person(s) and license numbers of any vehicles involved.
- Tell a trusted neighbor if your house will be unoccupied for an extended period. Tell him or her how to reach you in an emergency.
- Look after your neighbors' homes when they are away, and ask them to look after yours. This includes picking up mail or newspapers and putting back the garbage cans or recycling bins, and turning lights on and off if there is no automatic timer.
- Attend Neighborhood Watch meetings often. Your local crime prevention officer will teach you about local crime trends and what you can do about them.
- Get involved. It is the most effective way to reduce or prevent crime and make your neighborhood safe.
- Remember, your job is to report crime.

# Reporting Crime...

Eyewitness information is the key to solving many crimes. The following tips will assist you when reporting crime to your local law enforcement agency.

Call the police/sheriff immediately. A five-minute delay can reduce the chance of ever catching the criminals.

Tell the police/sheriff as much as you can. No fact is too trivial. In many cases, it is what the victims and witnesses tell law enforcement about the criminal that results in an arrest. You may be asked the following when reporting crime:

- Who, What, When, Where?
- How many suspects were there?
- Can you describe the suspects?
- Can you describe their vehicles?
- What was/were the license plate number(s)?
- What did they do?
- What did they say?
- What did they take?
- Which way did they go?

Sometimes, due to limited resources and personnel, the police/sheriff may not be able to respond immediately. They have to prioritize their calls based on apparent danger to human life. Don't be discouraged. They will get to you as soon as possible. Do not attempt to stop or detain the suspect(s) yourself.



## What is Suspicious?

Basically, anything that seems even slightly “out of place” or is occurring at an unusual time of day or night could be criminal activity.

### Obvious Things to Watch For

- A stranger entering your neighbor’s house when it is unoccupied.
- A scream heard anywhere may mean robbery or assault.
- Offers of merchandise at ridiculously low prices may mean stolen property.
- Anyone removing accessories, license plates, or gas from a car should be reported.
- Anyone peering into parked cars may be looking for a car to steal or for valuables left in the car.
- Persons entering or leaving a business place after hours.
- A sound of breaking glass or loud explosive noises could mean an accident, burglary or vandalism.
- Persons loitering around schools, parks and secluded areas could be sex offenders.
- Persons loitering in the neighborhood who do not live there.
- Anyone forcing entry to, or tampering with a residence, business, or vehicle should be reported.

### Some Things to Watch For That Are Not So Obvious

#### *Strangers and Solicitors*

Check identification of all solicitors, meter readers, and repairmen prior to allowing them entry into your home. Be suspicious of alleged deliverymen with a wrong address or asking if someone lives there.

#### *Someone Carrying Property*

If it’s at an unusual hour, or in an unusual place, or if the property is not wrapped as if just purchased.

### ***Someone Going Door-to-Door In Your Neighborhood***

Watch for awhile. If after a few houses are visited, one or more persons tries a door to see if it is locked, looks into windows, or goes into a back or side yard, it could be a burglar. Call police immediately; don't wait for the person to leave.

### ***One or More Juveniles Walking Through The Neighborhood Looking into Automobiles or Backyards.***

### ***Traffic to and From a Certain Residence***

It is not suspicious unless it occurs on a daily basis or very regular basis, especially during late or unusual hours.

### ***Any Person Taking a Shortcut Through a Backyard***

### ***Any Vehicle Moving Slowly and Without Lights, or Following a Course That Appears Aimless or Repetitive in Any Location***

But particularly in areas of schools, parks and playgrounds. Occupants may be looking for places to rob or burglarize, or they could be drug pushers or sex offenders.

### ***Parked, Occupied Vehicles Containing One or More Persons***

If it is an unusual hour they could be lookouts for a burglary in progress.

### ***An Abandoned Vehicle Parked On Your Block***

May be a stolen vehicle.

### ***Continuous Repair Operations at Non-Business Locations***

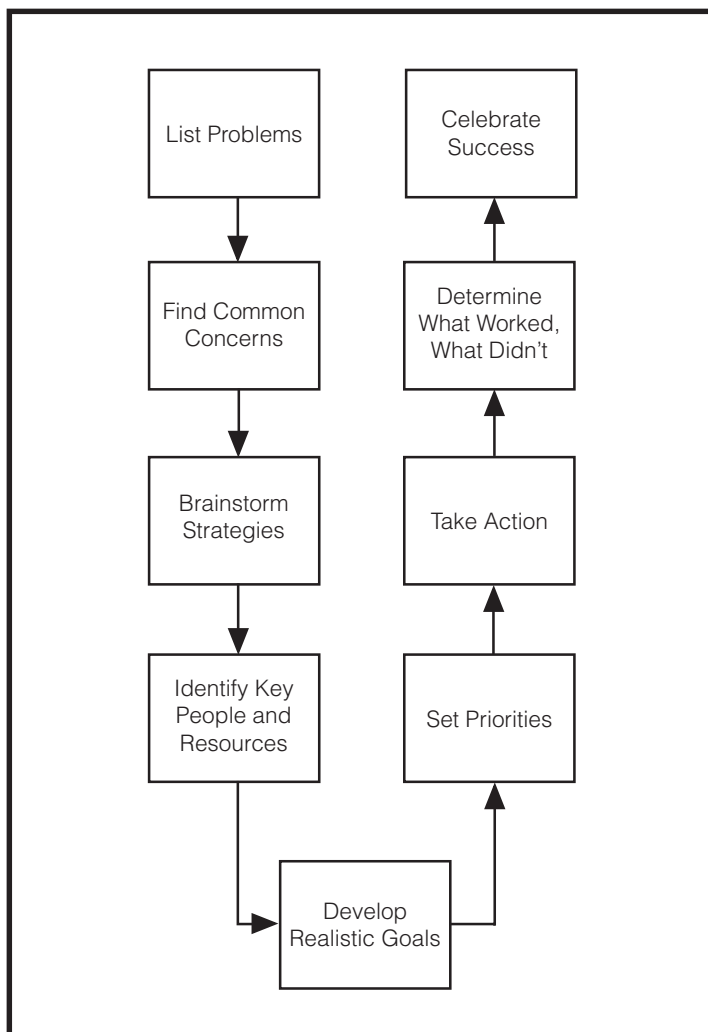
Could mean stolen property is being stripped, repainted, or otherwise altered.

### ***Persons Making a Quick Change of Vehicles***

May be attempting to elude the police or abandoning a stolen vehicle.

# Developing An Action Plan...

## A Process For Developing Your Action Plan



# Personal Property Inventory List

A personal property inventory list like the one below should be kept with your personal records in a safe place.

Description of Item	Serial Number	Value

# Suspect Description Form

Sex: Race: Age: Height: Weight:

**Hair:**

Color: Length: Type: Style: Sideburns:

**Eyes:**

Color: Glasses: Type:

**Face:**

Complexion: Mustache: Beard:

Ski Mask: Stocking/Mask:

**Other:**

Tattoos:

Amputation:

Scars/Marks:

Speech/Accent:

Distinguishable Gait/Limp:

Bag/Backpack, etc.:

**Clothing:**

Cap/Hat: Coat/Jacket:

Shirt/Tie or Blouse: Pants:

Skirt: Dress:

Shoes: Stocking:

Gloves: Jewelry:

Purse:

**Weapons:**

Handgun/Knife etc.:

# Vehicle Description Form

**License Plate:**

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Make:**

Model: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Body Style (2-door, convertible, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Color: \_\_\_\_\_

Identifying hubcaps, wheels, dents, scratches, bumper stickers, decals, etc.:

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# Important Phone Numbers

## EMERGENCY

Police .....  
Fire .....  
Ambulance .....

911

Your Local Law Enforcement Representative (Name)	
Home Phone	Work Phone
Name	Address
Home Phone	Work Phone
Children's Names	
Name	Address
Home Phone	Work Phone
Children's Names	
Name	Address
Home Phone	Work Phone
Children's Names	

Name	Address
Home Phone	Work Phone
Children's Names	

Name	Address
Home Phone	Work Phone
Children's Names	

Name	Address
Home Phone	Work Phone
Children's Names	

Name	Address
Home Phone	Work Phone
Children's Names	

Name	Address
Home Phone	Work Phone
Children's Names	



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*"Maintaining a safe,  
crime-free community  
is a high priority  
for me as your  
representative in the  
State Assembly.*

*Neighborhood Watch  
is a local volunteer  
program that can  
help reduce crime  
in your neighborhood.*

*I encourage all  
Californians to  
participate in  
Neighborhood  
Watch."*